RACKCENTRE

CHOOSING THE RIGHT DATA CENTRE PARTNER

The Promise of The African Data Centre Market

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Introduction

Africa is becoming a hotbed of opportunity for anyone wanting to capitalise on the investment potential offered by emerging markets. Currently, the data centre sector is a key market on the precipice of immense growth and is rapidly becoming a target for international business expansion. After solid growth over the past four years, predictions are that the African region's available capacity is exploding. In its African Colocation Gold Rush 2020 report, Xalam Analytics predicts that Sub Saharan African (SSA) markets will add more colocation IT load capacity in 2020 alone – more than over the previous four years combined. They predict that the divide between the core four and the other SSA markets is widening; growing Internet traffic and demand for cloud services may be increasing. Adding to the possibilities within this market is the data centre's role in Africa's digital transformation.It becomes more apparent that customers no longer seek a landlord of server space, but a neutral cloud service broker, a reliable platform, and a digital transformation infrastructure enabler.

Choosing a data centre can be challenging given the complexity of digital transformation and the evolving role of data centres as a partner to businesses in transformation and wanting to succeed in a rapidly digital-first era. There are several key criteria to consider when selecting a strategic data centre partner. Here's our considered view as one of the continents leading vendor neutral data centre providers.

What to Look for When Choosing A Data Centre Partner?

At the outset, it is important to know that choice is not just about a service provider but choosing a partner in the business digital transformation journey. It is essential that selection mirrors business needs and strategy, and that offers what is required to meet current and future strategic business requirements.

1. Reliability and Uptime

Typically, when the data centre is down, the business is down with the consequential negative impact on customers, revenue, and reputation.

When assessing potential data centre partners, the service levels they commit to and their track record are very important. Audits and certifications provide an independent assessment of a data centre's reliability, security, and regulatory compliance. These are crucial for cloud computing, telecommunications, health, financial services, and critical government services. Infrastructure and operational efficiency are key drivers at Rack Centre and help maintain 100% uptime and zero downtime since the launch in 2013. Rack Centre brings global best practice to Nigeria, and Africa, as the first carrier neutral data centre in the region to achieve Uptime Institute Tier III Certification of Constructed Facility (TCCF).

2. Location

Location matters, it is vital that the data centres are in the strategic locations that your customers need to be, while also taking local conditions into account. Rack Centre is 30 metres above sea level in a private estate in an industrial area. It is well served by stable energy sources, network connectivity and industry partners.

3. Neutral Ecosystem of Connectivity Cloud and Internet Exchange Point

A thriving ecosystem of service providers and enterprise partners is what will provide a business with the most value. According to an IDC study, the best colocation providers "will offer a wide range of network providers, Internet exchange (IX) facilities, and access to major cloud providers." Carrier-neutral data centres are where many providers and enterprises aggregate and interconnect IT services and resources; they provide greater flexibility and cost efficiencies. With a wide variety of connectivity

and cloud options to choose from, it makes it easier to create hybrid multi-cloud infrastructures that avoid vendor lock-in.

Rack Centre provides a comprehensive ecosystem of over 40 local and international carriers, including connection to all five major undersea cables, ISPs, and content distribution networks. Its carrier neutral environment offers unrestricted interconnects between customers, as it allows them to manage traffic to get better value, lower latency, and higher resilience. Rack Centre is not owned by or affiliated to any carrier; never competing with telco and cloud services customers. Customers can typically save up to 30% of connectivity costs compared to owning a data Centre, with little lock-in risks to one carrier. Rack Centre has a growing range of cloud providers in its cloud neutral marketplace, delivering cloud solutions including IaaS, SaaS, DRaaS, PaaS and locally hosted websites with low latency, high performance and peering with the Internet Exchange Point.

4. Security, Facility Access, and Business Continuity

Data centres are at the heart of the modern business and protecting the data and equipment within them is vital. Advanced security measures include layered security zones, biometric access, CCTV camera, and surveillance systems. Rack Centre is constructed and sited with effective security within a private estate, and ten layers of physical security combined with both card and biometric access control devices. Rack Centre's Quality Management System encompasses ISO 27001, ISO 9001 the business management standard and ISO 22301 business continuity standards underpinning the overall quality and security of service delivery. ISO 45001 occupational heath and safety standard is in process.

5. Operational Efficiencies and Sustainability

Ensuring that the data centre is run optimally, it is crucial to understand how the business approaches its operational efficiencies and its sustainability. An example is where Rack Centre targets regional industry leading Power Utilisation Efficiency (PUE) and works on various green data centre initiatives to set other benchmarks in the Africa data centre landscape. As data centres are energy intensive and power demands are ever increasing, Rack Centre's Phase 2 facility's design targets regional industry leading Power Utilisation Efficiency (PUE) benchmarks and will contribute towards sustainable development goals in affordable and clean energy, industry innovation and infrastructure and climate action. The advanced gas based generating capacity under construction is being implemented in tandem with mixed renewable energy infrastructure.

6. Scalability and Innovation

Xalam Analytics notes that 'the pace of data centre construction in Africa has accelerated, as the market awakens to the continent's hosting and cloud services opportunity; around 15 new facilities came to market between 2017 and 2019; we estimate that at least 20 new facilities will come to market in 2020 and 2021, as demand expands and providers and investors get more comfortable with colocation business models in the African context'.

Rack Centre has completed the Hyperscale Expansion Programme design at the Lagos campus, which will be the largest in West Africa, creating a campus with a total IT power capacity of 16MW. This expansion is market leading and will set the bar on hyperscale data centre initiatives in the region. Xalam Analytics predicts that Nigeria will see the second highest Colo market expansion in SSA over the next five years.